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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

1. Mideast
2. U.S.-Israel Relations

Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz quoted U.S. sources as saying yesterday that President George Bush is likely to visit Masada during his visit to Israel

next month. The newspaper reported that PM Ehud Olmert would escort Bush to the site. Yediot reported that Bush would like to address the Knesset and meet Israeli youth.

Israel Radio quoted a senior Palestinian source in Ramallah, who is involved in the negotiations with Israel, as saying that since Annapolis, Israel has conceded less than it did at Camp David in 2000.

All media led with the two incidents along the Gaza border yesterday: The killing of an elite-unit Druze soldier in a clash in the Khan Yunis area in the morning, and of two Israeli civilian employees at the fuel depot at Nahal Oz, near the Karni crossing, in the afternoon. The media reported that the depot was not secured by the army and that several Palestinians warned of the attack. Two of the four Palestinian terrorists were killed in the exchange of fire with IDF troops immediately after striking Nahal Oz. Although Islamic Jihad, the Popular Resistance Committees, along with a group linked to Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility, Israel -- in particular Defense Minister Ehud Barak -- blamed Hamas. Leading media quoted GOI sources as saying that the terrorists will continue their attempts to kidnap IDF soldiers or take over Israeli communities. Israel Radio quoted Israel's Ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman, as saying that the attack took place while Israel supplies fuel to Gaza. The radio reported that PA sources demanded that Israel continue supplying fuel to Gaza, while Hamas applauded the action.

Ha'aretz reported that PM Olmert has not been invited to a regional summit at Sharm El-Sheikh, contradicting reports he would participate in the event. Ha'aretz quoted U.S. sources as saying yesterday that the summit would be attended by President Bush, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and Jordan's King Abdullah II, and that it is intended as a U.S.-Arab meeting. Citing AP, Ha'aretz reported that President Bush, Tony Blair, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Rupert Murdoch are among those expected to attend the May conference organized by President Shimon Peres.

Yediot reported that PM Olmert's bureau has announced that due to a full schedule, Olmert will be unable to meet with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who arrives in Israel on Sunday. Ha'aretz, The Jerusalem Post, and Israel Hayom cited a Fox News report broadcast yesterday that Carter will meet Hamas leader Khaled Mashal in 10 days during a visit to Damascus. Ha'aretz reported that Carter's press secretary confirmed he was planning on visiting Damascus but denied he had any intention to meet with Mashal. "President Carter plans to visit Damascus next week but we are still formulating details and will issue a press release next week," she was quoted as saying. Ha'aretz and Israel Hayom quoted former U.S. ambassador to the UN John Bolton as saying: "Going to Damascus and meeting with Mashal at this time is terrible timing and shows a lack of judgment on Carter's part."

The Jerusalem Post reported that Swedish FM Carl Bildt angered Israeli officials yesterday when, in an interview with a Swedish radio station, he made a direct comparison between Hamas and opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Jerusalem Post presented the results of a recent questionnaire compiled by the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center and presented to the three U.S. presidential candidates: Democratic candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton back active diplomacy begun by the Bush administration to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, while Republican candidate John McCain would take a "more hands-off approach."

The Jerusalem Post quoted Likud Chairman Benjamin Netanyahu as saying yesterday at an international conference entitled "Russia, the Middle East, and the Challenge of Radical Islam": "Iran will be the first nuclear state in history against which deterrence won't work, even if the deterrent is nuclear." The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday, in an interview with the newspaper, Lars Kunchel, spokesperson for the Swiss Foreign Ministry in Bern, blasted the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for not telling the truth in an ad campaign claiming that a 25-year, multi-billion dollar Swiss Iranian energy deal -- a deal to which the Swiss state "was not party" would contribute to international terrorism. The

Jerusalem Post quoted ADL Director Abe Foxman as saying that "Switzerland is hiding behind legalities."

Yediot reported that the number of Israelis immigrating to the U.S. has declined. Only 1,831 green cards were issued to Israelis in 2007 -- the lowest number in a decade.

Visiting Polish PM Donald Tusk was quoted as saying in an interview with Israel Radio that at the end of this year his government will begin compensating -- to the tune of 5% to 20% -- Jews and others for material losses sustained during World War II and under the Communist regime. Yediot and The Jerusalem Post reported that President Peres will visit Poland next week.

Globes and other media reported that the GOI's long-term liabilities reached 1.28 trillion shekels (around \$356 billion) at the end of 2007, while its assets totaled 319 billion shekels (around \$88.7 billion). The Finance Ministry report adds that the 2007 cross budget totaled 325 billion shekels (around \$90.35 billion) and budget usage was 96%.

The Jerusalem Post cited a poll commissioned by the Washington-based Joshua Fund, an evangelical organization: Eighty-two percent of American Christians say they have a "moral and biblical obligation" to support Israel, and half say that Jerusalem should remain its undivided capital.

11. Mideast:

Summary:

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "It tugs the heartstrings of some people in Gaza that people have something to eat and they are doing everything to sabotage even this minimum."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "The Palestinian leadership adamantly places 'resistance' -- read: killing Israeli civilians and soldiers -- over providing food, shelter, and the prospect of a better life for its people."

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Israel needs to respond as if [a thwarted] kidnapping had been a success.... But there is no chance of Israel responding forcefully."

Veteran journalist and anchor Dan Margalit wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom: "After the uprooting of Gush, Katif Israel has absolutely no right to show any understanding for the continuation of terror from Gaza."

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "[Peace Now] bound together (justified) resistance to the occupation of the Palestinians and (invalid) faith that the Palestinians are allies."

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in Ha'aretz: "[Peace Now] undermined many people's confidence in the righteousness of the Zionist enterprise, and even in the Jewish state's right to exist in the Land of Israel [i.e. Israel, including the territories]."

Block Quotes:

1I. "Mustn't Spoil the Party"

Military correspondent Alex Fishman wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (4/10): "The American President is on his way here, with birthday presents in his bag. These are valuable gifts that Israel has been wanting for a long time and has been

working hard to get. Uncle Sam expects, in return for the gifts, that Israel give him something akin to a document of understandings with the Palestinians. So there must be no rifts today with the PA.... [But] yesterday's terror attack ... shows that Palestinian terror has gone up a rung. Whereas up until now it would use the civilian population as a human shield from where it would fire Qassam rockets and act against Israel, now it is also turning this population into a hostage. It uses its suffering for political achievements. Palestinian terror in Gaza is willing to cut off fuel supplies and attack the crossings to stop goods from entering in order to further the pictures of suffering. After all, there is no real economic siege there. Every day for the last three months 90 trucks filled with food and other goods have been arriving. The Sufa crossing [to the southern Gaza Strip] did not stop for even a single day during these months -- despite the intelligence warnings of terror attacks. It tugs the heartstrings of some people in Gaza that people have something to eat and they are doing everything to sabotage even this minimum."

II. "Murder at the Border"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/10): "The Palestinian leadership adamantly places 'resistance' -- read: killing Israeli civilians and soldiers -- over providing food, shelter, and the prospect of a better life for its people. And it has ruthlessly exploited any and every vulnerable target where Israel tries to partner with Gazans for their own benefit -- including joint industrial zones, supply depots and border crossings -- to carry out such killings.... Thousands upon thousands of tons of humanitarian aid have been transferred by Israel to an entity that is at war with us -- a state of war unaffected, indeed often intensified, by Israel's 2005 removal of all vestiges of its civilian and military presence in Gaza. Israel insistently maintains this aid supply, enabling an enemy government that targets our civilians to continue to rule, because, despite everything, it cannot bear to see ordinary Palestinians starving. Israel does so, too, because that's what the civilized world expects from the only democracy in the Middle East. But Israel must have its limits.... If all the international community is prepared to do is issue ineffectual denunciations of the 'cycle of violence' rather than of its instigators, and if it persists in equating Israeli retaliation with Palestinian aggression, it too will remain part of the problem. The Quartet -- the EU, UN, U.S. and Russia -- should, rather, demand an immediate halt to Palestinian violations of Israel's border. And it should firmly support Israel in conditioning ongoing assistance to Gaza on a halt to such attacks."

III. "No Understanding for the Continuation of Terror"

Veteran journalist and anchor Dan Margalit wrote on page one of the independent Israel Hayom (4/10): "While Israel mourns its three terror victims who died around Gaza, it is worthwhile putting things in perspective: After the uprooting of Gush Katif, Israel has absolutely no right to show any understanding for the continuing terror from Gaza. Winking by the government in this matter is totally forbidden.... But the responsibility for the chaos isn't [Hamas's] only. IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi commented to [Agriculture Minister] Shalom Simhon that the pressure to ease the siege of Gaza, as a service to his farmers' economic interests plays into Hamas's hands."

IV. "There Is Going to Be Another Kidnapping"

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport wrote on page one of the popular, pluralist Maariv (4/10): "There is going to be another kidnapping in the Gaza Strip. It will take another week or two, a month or two, and maybe even a year or two, but there is no doubt that if drastic action is not taken around the Gaza Strip, sooner or later the terror organizations, headed by Hamas, are going to take either Israeli civilians or soldiers captive.... If the [Israel Defense Forces] publicly spoke yesterday about the possibility that the terrorists intended to carry out a kidnapping operation, Israel needs to respond as if the kidnapping had been a success and not the way it did yesterday when supposedly 'just' one soldier was killed in a raid and two civilians were killed in the fuel depot. But there is no chance of Israel responding forcefully. The policy of 'containment' that was in place prior to the Second Lebanon War, the

policy of taking terror attacks in stride as long as the price paid wasn't 'intolerable' is now being applied to the Gaza Strip. Indeed, there aren't any simple solutions for this complex situation, but in any event the chances of the military echelon suggesting a large-scale military operation in the Gaza Strip right before Passover and the 60th anniversary celebrations right after that are low."

IV. "A White Tent in the Square"

Columnist Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (4/10): "The visionary element in Peace Now was, and remains, an illusion. It was a messianic illusion, a self-deception. But, illusory slogan aside, there was also an incisive grasp of reality. It understood that occupation corrupts, that the settlements were a disaster, and that every effort must be made to divide the land between two nation-states.... Peace Now was an impressive movement.... [But it] never distinguished between the solid truth of the occupation and the shaky truth of the promise of peace. It bound together (justified) resistance to the occupation of the Palestinians and (invalid) faith that the Palestinians are allies..... It was captivated by the PLO's charms, and Oslo's delusions, and finally became Yasser Arafat's hostage. Then, when harsh reality struck at Camp David, Peace Now lacked the courage to face it and take stock. It did not face the public and declare where it was right, and where it went wrong, and how it would update its peace message. With this failure, Peace Now's moral authority crumbled, it lost political clout and finally it simply faded away."

VI. "War and Peace (Now)"

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in Ha'aretz (4/10): "Peace, which tops the list of [Peace Now's] objectives, is moving further away and the number of victims -- Jewish as well as Arab -- is rising. In addition, when the movement pinned the primary blame for the absence of peace on its own people, it sinned against truth, and against peace as well. The ramifications of this sin are that it undermined many people's confidence in the righteousness of the Zionist enterprise, and even in the Jewish state's right to exist in the Land of Israel [i.e. Israel, including the territories]. The more this feeling of Jewish righteousness was undermined, the more the Arab, especially the Palestinian, sense of self-confidence blossomed. For if the Jews blame themselves, as proven by Peace Now rallies (which a biased press greatly exaggerated, thereby strengthening the Arabs' feeling that time was on their side), then why move toward a peaceful solution? It's better to wait until there's no more wind in the sails of the Zionist state and it collapses."

12. U.S.-Israel Relations:

Summary:

Conservative columnist Menachem Benn wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "The development of the Jewish-Christian connection is perhaps the most important occurrence in Israel-America relations over the past decades."

Block Quotes:

"Jewish Ingratitude"

Conservative columnist Menachem Benn wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (4/10): "The development of the Jewish-Christian connection is perhaps the most important occurrence in Israel-America relations over the past decades: From a base of support of five million Jews

in the U.S., backing has grown to 50 million 'Christian Zionists' ... but it looks as if the Jewish and Israeli publics have not yet internalized this entirely.... Two segments of society are trying to break the connection: the ultra-Orthodox and some conservative religious groups, who fear their missionary influence, and the Leftists, who fear the right-wing influence, because they are opposed to returning land and the establishment of a Palestinian state.... Reform [Judaism] leader Rabbi Eric Yoffie has called on Israel to boycott one of those key Christian organizations -- the one led by pastor and televangelist John Hagee, claiming that Hagee is opposed to a two-state solution. This means that if you want to be a friend of Israel, you must believe in Palestinian statehood, otherwise you'll be ostracized."

JONES